

Reading Project: Year 5

In our reading project we are going to discuss some of the most famous novels of English and American literature. All the novels in this project require careful reading beyond the plot level. For a full understanding you will have to read between the lines and find the symbolism and allusions of the texts. In order to see these hidden beauties always read with a pencil in your hand and mark any interesting or odd passages in the margin. Discuss your selections in your readers' conferences.

Step 1: Choosing a novel

Visit Amazon.com in the internet and find the five books in our project. Read the brief plot summaries and some readers' comments, then choose the novel that interests you most. You need not order them at Amazon. All of the books are available in Graz.

The Books:

John Steinbeck, *The Pearl*
 George Orwell, *Animal Farm*
 Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World*
 William Golding, *Lord of the Flies*
 J.D. Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye*
 Ernest Hemingway, *The Old Man and the Sea*

Step 2: Getting Started: (Reading Diary)

Read the first chapter of your novel and write a 10-minute entry in your reading diary. Please take your reading diary very seriously. Go beyond the plot level and write about all your thoughts, associations, questions...(Check your handout "What is a reading diary?" for further instructions.) Write a second entry into your reading diary after you have read the first half of your novel, and a third one after finishing.

Your reading diary and your marginal notes in the book will be used as a basis for discussion in your readers' conferences. These notes will also help you remember your reflections later (for Matura preparation for example).

Step 3: Readers' Conferences and Workshop tasks

1. Work in your group and share your reflections and questions. Read each other's diaries and try to answer each other's questions. Ask your teacher for help in case of disagreements or open problems.
2. In each readers' conference choose 10 vocab. items that you would like to remember and write them into your vocab book.
3. Do the workshop tasks carefully and collect all the tasks in a folder.

Step 4: Preparing the Presentation

Choose one or two of the presentation tasks (see separate handout). Distribute the work load evenly among the group members and design an interesting, well-rounded group presentation.

Copy your contribution for all the group members + one for your teacher.

Step 5: Presentations

Groups present their novels.

Peer-evaluation and feedback of the presentations + Assessment and feedback from teacher

Step 6: Project Folder

Organize your project folder and hand it in for final assessment. Hand in your reading diary.

Book Presentation

For our final presentations of the reading project choose one of the following tasks. Each student in your group must do a different task. Discuss which of the tasks are most meaningful in connection with your novel. Choose tasks that complement each other so that the class gets a full picture of the main themes, symbolism, background and style of your novel.

- Short biography of the author
- Present an alternative book cover and blurb (and print out all the covers and blurbs available at Amazon.com). Discuss the symbolism of these covers.
- Character portraits of the main characters. (You might want to use the *character profiles* handout. Adding a picture will make your portraits even more realistic.)
- Present the historical and cultural background of your novel. (Use visual aids)
- Write a newspaper article reporting an important incident in your novel.
- Write a poem or song-lyrics that might be used in a film or radio-play of your book.
- Act out a scene of your choice.
- Prepare a "bubble sheet" (A3 poster) where you collect important quotes from your book.
- Identity bags: Bring a bag full of objects that are somehow important to the main character of your book. Show them and explain their relevance.
- Design a board game or quiz to be played in class.
- Choose your favorite scene and imagine how it would be shown in a film. Draw a film storyboard.
- Write a summary of the book (see handout *Literature summary*)
- Find a painting or other work of art that deals with one of the main themes in your book. (Choose a painting that reflects the symbolic and metaphorical level of your book, rather than a painting that shows the setting of your story.)
- Road signs: Identify a few symbolic items in your book and draw them like "road signs". Consider the shapes and colors of road signs and make use of their symbolism. Explain the meaning of the symbol on the back of your sign (50 – 100 words).
- Alternative idea: If you have an idea of your own contact your teacher about it.

Additional ideas for the readers of *Animal Farm* and *Brave New World*

- Present the basic principles of propaganda and advertising (use visual aids)
- Give a propaganda speech about any topic of your choice. Then explain the methods you have used.
- Present to pros and cons of genetic engineering (use visual aids)

Brave New World

by Aldous Huxley

Analyzing the Novel

Brave New World explores many themes that are relevant in our current culture. When reading the novel mark all the passages that deal with the following themes and note examples under the following headings.

In your readers' conferences discuss each of the themes and collect all the examples you have found. Start a new sheet for each theme, so you can collect lots of information and quotes.

Always note the page number of your quotes and samples.

Sum up your findings. (100-200 words per topic) Share the work of summing up and typing these paragraphs in your group.

Community and identity versus personal freedom

What are the prime goals of the new World State?

How are these goals achieved?

What are the costs?

Brainwashing, propaganda and psychological conditioning

Explain the terms (check an encyclopedia or a good dictionary)

Describe the types of manipulation that are used in the Huxley's fictional society.

Which forms of manipulation are used in our society. (See also task II A)

Cloning and genetic engineering

Describe how cloning and genetic engineering are used in the new society. What is the purpose of genetic engineering in the novel?

After reading the information in task II B compare the purposes of genetic manipulation in our society with the ones stated in the novel. Make a table.

Sex

What role does sex play in this new society? What are the rules?

Can you see a hidden purpose of this attitude towards sex?

What are the new attitudes towards love, relationships and the family?

Drugs and soma

Describe the effects of soma on the people in *Brave New World*.

What role does it play in this society?

Do we have anything similar in our present society?

Religion

Describe the major religion of this future world.

Mindless consumption and mindless diversions

List some examples of free-time activities and diversions available in this new world.

Can you find any parallels to our present world?

Satire of present day society

How does *Brave New World* satirize the present day? Describe three particular vices and follies that are its targets.

Beyond the novel:

After your work on the novel collect some information about the relevance of Huxley's ideas in our modern world.

A: Propaganda and Brainwashing

How are our minds manipulated by outside sources such as the media, advertising, government and peers? Is this always "bad" for us?

Read some of the info-pages on modern propaganda and advertising (on teacher's desk) or visit the following internet sites:

The Propaganda Page,

<http://www.uvm.edu/~jleonard/AGRI183/propoaganda.html>

Classical Conditioning:

<http://www.as.wvu.edu/~sbb/comm221/chapters/pavlov.htm>

Comment: A short article defining classical conditioning.

Share your findings and discuss your personal views on these issues. Then write a 200-300 word personal comment on this issue.

B: Genetic Engineering – Cloning

Read some of the information provided on the teacher's desk or visit one or two of the following internet sites:

[Should we be Cloning Around?](#)

<http://www.cnn.com/TECH/9702/24/cloned.sheep/index.html>

Comment: A CNN article that discusses the pros and cons of cloning.

[Dr. Frankenstein, I Presume?](#)

<http://www.salonmagazine.com/feb97/news/news2970224.html>

Comment: An interview with the scientist who cloned a sheep.

[Scottish Sheep Shocker](#)

<http://whyfiles.news.wisc.edu/034clone/ethics1.html>

Comment: This tabloid-style article looks at both sides of the cloning debate.

[Genetic Ethics](#)

<http://matu1.math.auckland.ac.nz/~king/Preprints/book/genes/genaug/ethics.htm>

Comment: This article discusses the main issues surrounding genetic engineering.

[Greenpeace](#)

<http://www.greenpeace.org/~geneng/>

Comment: This site presents Greenpeace's point of view on genetic engineering

Make up your mind and sum up your findings. (200 – 300 words).

For your final group presentation split up the work among your group-members. Each group member must explore one or two themes in depth and present them to the class in our final book fair.